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ATL AND BTL ADVERTISING

Nowadays advertising plays very important role. Most of the time, advertising enhances market performance by providing useful information to consumers and by enabling firms to promote the attributes of their products and services and, thereby, to compete better with each other. On the other hand, advertising may adversely affect market performance when businesses use it to transmit deceptive or fraudulent messages on which reasonable consumers are induced to rely to their detriment. In organizational business and marketing communications, below the line (BTL) is an advertising technique. It uses less conventional methods than the usual specific channels of advertising to promote products, services, etc.

The terms 'below-the-line' promotion or communications refers to forms of non-media communication, even non-media advertising. Below-the-line promotions are becoming increasingly important within the communications mix of many companies, not only those involved in fmcg products, but also for industrial goods.

Some of the ways by which companies do BTL (below the line) promotions are by exhibitions, sponsorship activities, public relations and sales promotions like giving freebies with goods, trade discounts given to dealers and customers, reduced price offers on products, giving coupons which can be redeemed later etc.

Below the line sales promotions are short-term incentives, largely aimed at consumers. With the increasing pressure on the marketing team to achieve communication objectives more efficiently in a limited budget, there has been a need to find out more effective and cost efficient ways to communicate with the target markets. This has led to a shift from the regular media based advertising.

Some of the interesting examples are:

- Ring tones and music videos on cell phones are helping the entertainment industry to promote for a music video or a movie for dirt-cheap rate as compared to media promotion.
- Pepsi organized an inter school cricket event for 425 schools across 14 cities which did wonders for the company by promoting the brand amongst the right target customer for almost no cost.

Another interesting BTL promotion was by NIKE. An athlete dressed up in Nike sportswear could be seen jogging on an elevated treadmill for the whole day on National Highway 8, Delhi.

Above the line (ATL) is an advertising technique using mass media to promote brands. Major above-the-line techniques include TV and radio advertising, web and internet banner ads. This type of communication is conventional in nature and is considered impersonal to customers.

The term comes from accountancy and is to do with the way in which Procter and Gamble, one of the world's biggest clients, were charged for their media in the 1950s and 1960s. Advertising agencies made so much commission from booking media for clients that the creative generation and actual production costs of making TV ads was free - hence above the line. Everything else they paid for and was therefore below the line.

For example, the proliferation of TV channels means that there is a far smaller likelihood that millions of people will be watching the same commercial at the same time than that a similar number will walk past the same communication in Wal-Mart.

Obviously the Internet is the one remaining mass communication channel. But when people engage with internet advertising it is usually because they are responding to highly targeted content-driven websites. But can these really be called mass media? Just because it's on the internet doesn't mean the whole world will look at it. Increasingly, the skills learnt in below the line advertising such as specific targeting and specification of communication are being used in mass media, particularly the internet.